CONCERNING AIRMEN ON THE SUPERPHYSICAL PLANE

BY

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AUTHOR'S NOTE.

Since the publication of "Angels, Saints and Bowmen of Mons," my attention has been drawn to the works of two other writers of the same Surname, whose signatures differ only in a single letter from my own. In order, therefore, to avoid confusion, my work will, in future, be signed as under—

I. E. STILWELL-TAYLOR.

CONCERNING AIRMEN ON THE SUPERPHYSICAL PLANE

IN these dark days of widespread sorrow for universal family bereavement, we all endeavour to still our anguish somewhat by the reflection, "Death is but a passing over to another aspect of life, and sooner or later we shall meet our dear ones again." Eastern doctrines definitely tell us this, and even Western orthodoxy admits it; albeit we look to the metaphysician, the symbologist, the mystic and the scientist to reveal to us more of the hidden truths of nature than are comprehended by ecclesiasticism, and to give us a better understanding of the Divine mechanism of Creation which is directly responsible for the rhythmical exactitude of that fundamental law of evolution known to theology as "Divine Justice," and from which "one jot or one tittle shall in no-wise pass, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. v., 18), The Clergy are content to tell us that God, the Creator, rules over all; and whenever practical men and women seek, outside the Church, to discover the *modus operandi* of Creation, they are told by the priesthood that they must not pry into divine mysteries; whereat the logical lay student of divine lore cannot fail to reason on this wise: "If we were never intended to improve our knowledge in this direction, why did the Saviour of the Christian Age counsel us as follows: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. vii., 7). If it is not through the medium of ecclesiasticism that we are to enquire, and not at the door of the Church that we are to knock; of whom, and at whose door, are we to apply? Thus individual intuition leads each unit of the human race to seek knowledge in accordance with the measure of light within itself, and, conse-

quently, the routes by which the different nations, creeds, and classes travel towards the highway of the parent source of them all, are many and various; while Nature, in her ample wisdom, invariably refuses to rope into the path of orthodoxy the greatest moral teachers of the ages.

In his book entitled *Raymond*, Sir Oliver Lodge has cast upon the screen of physical life some interesting pictures of man's habits, customs and occupations on the superphysical plane which surrounds and interpenetrates our own world; although no true Occultist can fail to see that, in order to do so, he has dived into dangerous quarters; for if there is one law in Nature (otherwise Divinity) which, above all others, it is absolutely impossible to override, it is that of reciprocity, whose inevitable action St. Paul has aptly described in these words: " Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap " (Gal. vi., 7).

In plain language, we can never, on the superphysical plane of life, prevent like drawing to like, because all life being vibratory, and the vibratory rate of each man and woman being determined by the predominant trait of his or her character, it is impossible to prevent similar vibrations from meeting and mingling; and as the most moral men and women vibrate at too rapid a rate to be reached by the least so, the highest information is secured only by the highest moral researchers. Therefore, if we elect to institute our enquiries upon the superphysical plane through mediums who accept money for their services, who have unbalanced minds, are possessed of undesirable mental or moral qualities, or are of cramped intelligence; to the degree that their imperfections are sensed by like-minded entities, will these mediums, while functioning on the superphysical plane, get among similarly undesirable persons, and the information they receive from them and subsequently impart to their clients in the physical world,

will be proportionately shorn of its value. It is true that knowledge of superphysical life necessitates superphysical methods of acquisition; but there are two ways of making enquiry concerning the " sheep " of this other fold, of which Christ is the door [a], and if we climb up the back way into it, we must not expect to receive quite the same treatment as those who go in by the lawful entrance[b]. Let the field of research be what it may, there is always a heavy price to pay for knowledge; and even though occasional short cuts to academical erudition sometimes present themselves to the fortunate, there are no such byways to wisdom, which is upon the plane above knowledge, and can be won only by great purity of thought and action, continual prayer, and absolute faith in the unseen. If we believe that the present time represents the fateful " latter day " period of the Christian era which, preceding the dawn of the seventh age of the world, is recognised by theosophists as " the millennium," and by theologists as " heaven "; and if the story of the life and death of the Christ of Judea symbolises the Christian Age's evolutionary history from end to end, then the phenomena described by Sir Oliver Lodge in *Raymond* are perfectly natural to these times; and many of us who do so believe must be well aware that they are but the precursors of something far more wonderful which is yet to come. Biblical students will remember that the doctrine of Christianity, which emphasises all the Old Testament prophecies concerning the doings of this present (Christian) Age, teaches that the remarkable event which is destined to mark its close is the mastery of death by man; and that those of God's " sheep " whom we now describe as " the

(a) Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep (John x., 7).

(b) He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber (John x., 1).

dead," and who have hitherto occupied a separate "fold," will then be gathered into that which we, the living, inhabit[c]; thus the barrier between the two folds, or evolutionary states of the human soul, being broken down, we, the so-called living, and they, the "dead," will be able to pass in and out of each other's former habitations and—"find pasture"[d]; or, in other words, equalised evolutionary conditions. The two folds having then become one, and man having, consequently, risen above, and kicked aside, the stepping-stone of ecclesiastical doctrine, both states of the soul, now recognised as "living" and "dead," must necessarily be drawn under the rulership of a single "Shepherd," whose knowledge of both physical and superphysical life will proclaim his intimate relationship to the Omnipotent source of all being; and thus the kingdoms of this world will become those of our Lord and of his Christ[e].

Viewing this allegory, therefore, from every available aspect, we can do no other than understand that, at the end of the Christian Age (represented by the present time), the invisible superphysical plane which surrounds and interpenetrates the visible physical one which we inhabit, will become one with it (there shall be one fold), and that, consequently, the superphysical inhabitants of the one plane, and the physical ones of the other, will be placed upon a common basis of spiritual understanding and physical evolutionary development, requiring but one form of leadership for the two peoples, or—more correctly speaking—for those two aspects of the same people which we

(c) And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd (John x., 16).

(d) I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and go in and out, and find pasture (John x., 9).

(e) The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ (Rev. xi., 15).

now describe as " the living " and " the dead." The doctrine of every great world teacher such as the Christ of Judea admits of two interpretations; the one being for those who have ears to hear, and the other for those who have not (f); and it is to this dual interpretation of the Christian gospel that we owe the origin of our erroneous belief in the condition called " death " as distinct from that of life; but as we have been nearing the end of this age in which we are still living, the two separate planes occupied respectively by the living and the dead must, in accordance with Divine prophecy, have been steadily drawing nearer to each other; the Spiritual plane (or world) consequently growing more solid or material, while the material one has been becoming more spiritual, thus gradually equalising the two conditions of life by restoring the solidity of flesh and bone to superphysical humanity, and, at the same time, conferring upon the physical greater spiritual knowledge and executive. It is not difficult to understand that evolutionary advancements such as these must enable the two aspects of life ultimately to come under one form of government, or, in other words, permit the " sheep " from both " folds " to mingle freely under the guidance of one " Shepherd," whose knowledge of superphysical and physical conditions of life will enable him to straighten and hold with a firm hand the now tangled reins of our purely physical government. If, after his resurrection, the Christ had shown himself but once, and if that once had been the occasion of his meeting with Mary Magdalene in the garden of the Holy Sepulchre, we might not yet have looked for this remarkable meeting between physical and superphysical humanity which now constitutes the crowning wonder of the Christian age; but might rather have expected ethereal beings always to re-

(f) See Matt. xiii., 9, and verses following.

side upon a plane of life completely separated from our own, as inhabitants of which plane, though they might occasionally appear upon ours, we should be unable to touch them; and therefore, even then, they would still seem to us more or less unreal, as, at first sight, did the Master of Christianity to Mary. Our Saviour, however, was particularly careful to impress upon the minds of the early Christians that there were two forms in which, during the Christian Age, man would reappear on this earth : the first of these forms being ethereal and representing the " Spirits," or " Ghosts," in whose appearance in the visible universe most people have long believed; and the second being the substantial physical body of material man as seen and known on earth before " death."

Readers of *Raymond* may remember a certain passage of the book wherein the young soldier is at considerable pains to assure his father that, in the superphysical world, the so-called departed are solid and substantial as they are on earth; that they have, moreover, all the equivalents of earthly food, houses built with bricks, and solid streets. I am told that this statement has been denounced as blasphemous by certain of the clergy, by whom the book has been severely criticised in the pulpit; albeit there is nothing in it which conflicts in any way with the explanations and demonstrations of the Christ himself, whose last appearance was, as we all know, notably different to his first. When he appeared to Mary Magdalene in the garden of the Holy Sepulchre he was ethereal, and could not be touched by the physical hand(g); whereas when, for the last time, he came into the midst of his assembled disciples, he was solid; had flesh and bones (which he was careful to point out that a spirit does *not* have), and, in order to make assurance doubly sure as to his being

(g) Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father (John xx., 17).

actually the very same flesh and bone man whom they knew before "death," he not only invited his disciples to "handle him" and feel for themselves that it was he, but called for meat, which he ate before their eyes. (Luke xxiv., 36 to 43.)

By our Lord's own showing, therefore, there is mechanism in Heaven which reabsorbs the component parts of man's physical body as it begins to decay on earth. Presumably it is the magnetic power of his own Spirit that draws together the constituent parts of the body, which, being reformed, is doctored and nursed back to life on the superphysical plane after the same manner in which it is doctored and nursed back to health upon the physical. And, as these constituent parts of the body rise in the form of vapour (Biblically spoken of as "dew") from the earth which sets them free, it may as truly be said that man is in this manner "born again of water ('dew') and of the Spirit," as that, after the purification of the earth by the appearance thereon of such improved humanity, the kingdoms of this world will have become "those of our Lord and of his Christ."

And in these sad times it is comforting to realise that, the Spiritual being the perfected condition of mankind, of which the physical is but the reflection; though men may be maimed and mutilated at death, they are made whole again; and even have former physical defects rectified or modified in the superphysical hospitals, nursing homes, health resorts, etc., to which they are spiritually conducted.

It has already been said that there are two ways of securing information concerning those who have passed into superphysical life; the one being through the mediumistic agency of professional psychics, and the other through the strength of one's own faith in the existence and value of the unseen world. By the former method Sir Oliver Lodge has obtained certain information which will strengthen materialistic belief in the physical resurrection

of the dead, as preached and demonstrated by the Christ, and, as it happens that by the latter I am able to support some of "Raymond's" statements concerning the solid reality of the superphysical plane and its inhabitants, I desire to do so through the medium of these pages. For reasons which the reader, if he pleases, may discover for himself in the pages of one or other of my books,* I have a rooted dislike of what is popularly known as "Spiritualism"; to the best of my memory I have never seen a medium off the stage of St. George's Hall, and certainly I have never attended a séance in my life; nevertheless, I am fully aware that the law of evolution necessitates the use, by each researcher, of such tools as are presented to his notice at the particular stage of spiritual advancement at which he stands.

Like Sir Oliver, I have lost a dear son in this present strife. When war broke out he was employed in important scientific work under Government (having graduated B.Sc. at London University in 1914). Anxious to join the King's forces as soon as possible after taking his degree, he made several applications to his Director for leave do do so; at the same time asking that his post might be kept open for him, as were those of the other volunteers from the same institution. His applications, however, having been invariably refused, on the ground of indispensability to the department in which he was employed, he finally resigned his post, applied for a commission in the Royal Flying Corps, received it, and was gazetted Second Lieutenant at the end of March, 1916. Three months later he won his pilot's certificate, and having been selected for service with the military wing, proceeded, with the rest of his squadron, to Salonika on the 6th of September. Thence, in the following

* Notably "Essays on Theosophy," Theosophical Publishing House, 1, Upper Woburn Place, W.C. 1.

November, he was sent to Egypt, where, while temporarily acting as Instructor, he was killed in an aviation accident near Cairo on December 29th, 1916. In this brief sketch it is impossible to describe the whole series of psychological experiences which preceded, attended, and followed his death; but if, through the medium of these pages, the single episode I purpose to relate can reach and comfort bereaved parents whose faith needs strengthening through sources other than those which popular Spiritualism affords, my object in publishing it will have been attained.

Let it then be definitely understood by the reader that the information concerning superphysical life herein set down resulted from sheer unquestioning faith in the continued existence of life after death, entirely unsupported either by mediumistic influence or ecclesiastical doctrine, in so far as the latter departs from the ethics of true Christianity. Three months after my son's fatal accident, that is to say during the following March, feeling one night an overwhelming desire to know something materially definite as to his whereabouts, I thought I would try, in my own way, to make enquiry; accordingly, I put out the light and began to talk to him in a low but audible voice. I said, "D——, dear, I wonder where you are now; and whether you can hear me. Of course I know you are alive; and I have no doubt that I have seen you often since the accident, because I am quite sure that I have been on the plane where you are, over and over again, when I have been asleep; but you see, dear, the difficulty is, that when I come back here in the morning, I do not remember where I have been, or what I have seen; so that, though I am quite positive about your continued existence while I am on the other plane, when I come back to this, I have to cope with the unbelief of other people. Do you think you could manage to give me some idea of what you are doing, and where you are? I should so like to see you."

In course of time I fell asleep and, for the better understanding of the materialist pure and simple, it would, perhaps, be best to describe what followed, as a dream; though, of course, all the details of what I saw were far too vivid to be properly so classified. In my sleep I suddenly saw myself standing at the left-hand side of the opening of a large canvas tent, such as are ordinarily used in military camps; it stood on a field of coarse grass, and was supported in the usual way by ropes attached to pegs which were driven into the ground. From the front of the tent, near the opening at which I stood, two or three of these tightened ropes were visible, stretching away from it on either side; and, just beyond the wooden peg which fixed the front one to the ground, there stood a group of persons in dark clothing, talking among themselves. I did not notice their faces, they stood rather in the shadow; but some of them appeared to be relatives or friends of my own. As I was looking at them three or four young men, all rather short, and all dressed in grey flannel suits, came round the tent from the right-hand side of it, climbing over the ropes, one by one, as they advanced towards the opening at which I stood. I glanced momentarily at them, wondering why they were all dressed alike; and, at the same time, became conscious that others were coming round the tent on the left; this circumstance caused me to turn my gaze from right to left, when, immediately, I felt myself start violently. A tall, soldierly figure dressed in a grey flannel suit of the same shade and style as those worn by the short men on my right, stood close beside me, his right hand resting lightly on the crooked handle of a walking-stick. "Surely, *surely*," said I to myself, "that is D——, but" (and here I glanced towards the above-mentioned group of persons) "if it is, the others will recognise him too."

Barely had these words formed themselves in my mind

when a sharp, decisive voice from the group called out "D——!" Simultaneously I looked up at the tall man beside me and said "D——, it *is* you, dear, isn't it?" and I put my arm round his neck and kissed him, as I had done in bidding him goodbye at King's Cross Station when I last saw him in physical life. In a voice and manner which were so absolutely his own as to leave no shadow of doubt as to his identity, he answered,

"Yes, but I've got a bad leg."

The moment the young men, who were advancing from the right, heard my son's name spoken, they all hurried forward and, crowding round him, exclaimed, "Hullo!" "What happened?" My son, who remained standing close beside me, began to explain, very carefully, but in technical terms, which I could not understand, the cause of the aviation accident in which he had lost his life; and the young men listened with a concentrated attention and deep interest, which proclaimed their intimate knowledge of the subject under discussion.

Meanwhile I scrutinised my son's general appearance. As before mentioned, he was dressed in a grey flannel suit precisely the same as those worn by the other young men, and held a stick with a crooked handle in his right hand. I thought him looking thinner than when I saw him last; he had rather the appearance of having lately recovered from an illness, although he stood exceedingly upright, with well-squared shoulders; his height contrasting markedly with the diminutive figures of the other men. The stick in his right hand was made of some light-coloured wood, the handle being broadly crooked, and thus affording a comfortable grip. I think the wood must have been olive, for it was very similar to some olive wood candlesticks which another of my sons once brought me from Cairo, and which had been made in Jerusalem. The wood of the stick resembled that of the candlesticks,

having the same rather shiny appearance and pale buff colour which, in the case of the stick, shaded almost into white at the top of the crooked handle. My son did not appear to be greatly in need of support; he held the stick lightly in his right hand, with the point resting on the ground in the ordinary way, while he recounted the details of the accident, and I noticed how well the pearly buff colour harmonised with his grey suit. As he was speaking my attention was called to a neat, narrow gold band which was laid along the inner side of some of his teeth; it bridged what had apparently been a small gap caused by the loss of two side teeth. The band had the appearance of a narrow ribbon standing up edgeways, and on the flat side of it, exactly over the gap which it bridged, two teeth were neatly placed, side by side; their roots did not disappear in the gum after the manner in which false teeth are placed in the jaw by material dentists; the two teeth in their entirety were laid on the outer side of the gold ribbon at the point where it spanned the gap, and I could not help wondering how these teeth would ultimately fall into the gap itself, and how the gold support, which was of such particularly neat workmanship, would be drawn out when no longer required. Meanwhile my son, with all his accustomed clearness of diction and accuracy of detail, continued to explain and to demonstrate to his deeply-interested companions the circumstances which had attended the accident.

Apparently my own position was one of authority, for I seemed to be fully aware of the amount of accommodation available inside the tent by which I, my son, and his companions were now all gathered together; and while the young men chatted I began to grow uneasy on two points —firstly, that my son, with his characteristic disregard of personal suffering, might be kept standing on his "bad leg" longer than was good for him; and, secondly, that I

might, when he *did* enter the tent, have some difficulty in finding for him the kind of accommodation he would require. "What," I reflected, "shall I do about a bed for him? He ought to have a separate one on account of his bad leg. I wonder what can be done; I have the other boys here—I did not expect him."

With these words "I did not expect him," I woke, and the following is the best explanation I am able to give of the "dream." I presume that I had been standing (while out of the body in sleep) at the entrance to a superphysical hospital tent for convalescent officers of the Royal Flying Corps, who had laid down their lives in the service of their King and Country; and that that tent was the spiritual counterpart of one which was set aside for the use of convalescent aviators in the camp at A——, near Cairo, from whence my son had flown on the morning of the accident. I have three reasons for presuming this to be so. Firstly, because, as every Theosophist knows, the physical is the reflection of the spiritual, and therefore whatever exists here below has its prototype above; secondly, because the short, coarse and dry-looking grass upon which the tent stood recalled the description of the country which my son had given me; and thirdly, because the grey uniform worn by him and by the other young men was similar to that which is used for convalescent soldiers on the physical plane of life. It was obvious that either my son, or the other R.F.C. officers who met him at the opening of the tent, had but newly arrived there, for the meeting between them was quite evidently the first which had taken place since the accident; and the intense interest evinced by the short men, in the technical details which my son explained to them, can be accounted for as follows: The actual cause of the accident was, and still remains, a mystery; the machine was said to have been in a perfect condition when it went up, and flew well up to the time it

crashed to the ground. But although the other airmen discovered what happened, nobody could form a satisfactory opinion as to the actual cause which started the trouble. Accordingly, the accident, to this day, remains inexplicable on the physical plane of life, and, for this reason, was, and is, from the airman's point of view and in his language, "a very interesting one."

The group of persons standing opposite the opening of the tent would appear to be visitors, like myself, to the superphysical plane. Probably they were the superphysical selves of the mothers, wives, and sisters of departed aviators, and had come over in sleep to look for their kinsmen among the men who passed in and out of that tent.

The circumstance of the two teeth on the gold band in my son's mouth has now to be considered. It has been stated that former physical defects of the departed are, upon the superphysical plane, remedied in the course of reconstruction of the body, and, while bearing this in mind, the reader must here be informed that about two years before my son's death he had cut a wisdom tooth which, in its growth, had crowded the others to the extent of pushing the eye-tooth on the same side of the jaw too far forward, causing it to project. His dentist had observed that it was a pity that one or two of his (my son's) teeth, which were all good, and, with this exception, regular, had not been extracted from the side of the jaw before the wisdom tooth had commenced to grow up, in which case the eye-tooth would have remained in its place. The gradual growth of the wisdom tooth would have pushed the others forward, and thus have filled up the gap. Both my son and I, however, were averse to the idea of sacrificing good teeth, although we were equally disturbed in mind concerning the offending eye-tooth.

Directly I saw the gold band in my son's mouth

on the superphysical plane, I thought of what the physical dentist had said about removing one or two of his side teeth; and knowing that, upon that plane, thoughts are answered as readily as words are upon this one, I came to the conclusion that in curing the injuries which had been caused by the accident, the Spirit Doctor had detected this defect and sensed our thought concerning it, and a superphysical dentist, by placing upon a gold band over the gap the two whole, sound teeth which the physical dentist had wanted to extract (and which consequently had, by the superphysical one, now *been* extracted), had presented a symbolical picture of the perfect set of regular teeth which my son would have when the gap left by the extractions had naturally filled itself up. In the Spiritual world we get the greater part of our reliable information through signs and symbols, fables and pictures, in this way. If it were not so, I should have concluded that my son's teeth had been broken in the fall; and the words of his physical dentist concerning them would never have come into my mind at all.

But one more point of the " dream " now remains to be explained—namely, this: My son had alluded to his " bad leg "; it was the only injury he mentioned, and I felt that it was the only one of which he was conscious. But my attention was pointedly called to this injury, inasmuch as it was emphasised by my son's use of a walking-stick, which I particularly admired, and of which I still retain so marked a recollection that I should be able to single it out among any number of others.

In the official report from the War Office of my son's death, no mention had been made of any injury save that which had caused it—namely, fractured skull; the casual reader therefore might have expected my son to have spoken of that, and of that only; nevertheless, a little reflection will convince him that to do so would be an error

of judgment. Death is but sleep, and none of us can remember the exact moment at which we passed from consciousness into unconsciousness, nor recall the exact circumstance which caused us to do so; but if we have previously hurt ourselves, are stiff or ailing, we feel the pain again on waking, and, feeling it, remember how it originated. As it is on this plane, then, so it is upon the other; and as, on this plane, we waken from sleep, having overcome the drowsiness which stole our consciousness, so, on the other, do we return to life after we have been cured of the immediate cause of death, which, obviously, must be the first concern of the superphysical doctors and nurses who attend us. Equally obviously, the lesser injuries which remain for subsequent treatment are they which, in superphysical life, serve to remind us of the illness or the accident which brought us there. My son, therefore, was conscious only of the injury to his leg, and was evidently aware that he had been under treatment for it; but that which had proved fatal had necessarily been cured without his knowledge; and the reason why the injury to the leg was impressed upon my mind was to assure me that, although hurt, my son was not killed — that is to say, he was as much alive upon the superphysical plane as he was upon this, but would require a certain amount of time and care before he would again be fit for service.

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